AMAR CHITRA KATHA

VASAVADATTA

THE PRINCESS WHO CAPTIVATED A TRUE KSHATRIYA

Vol 674 |

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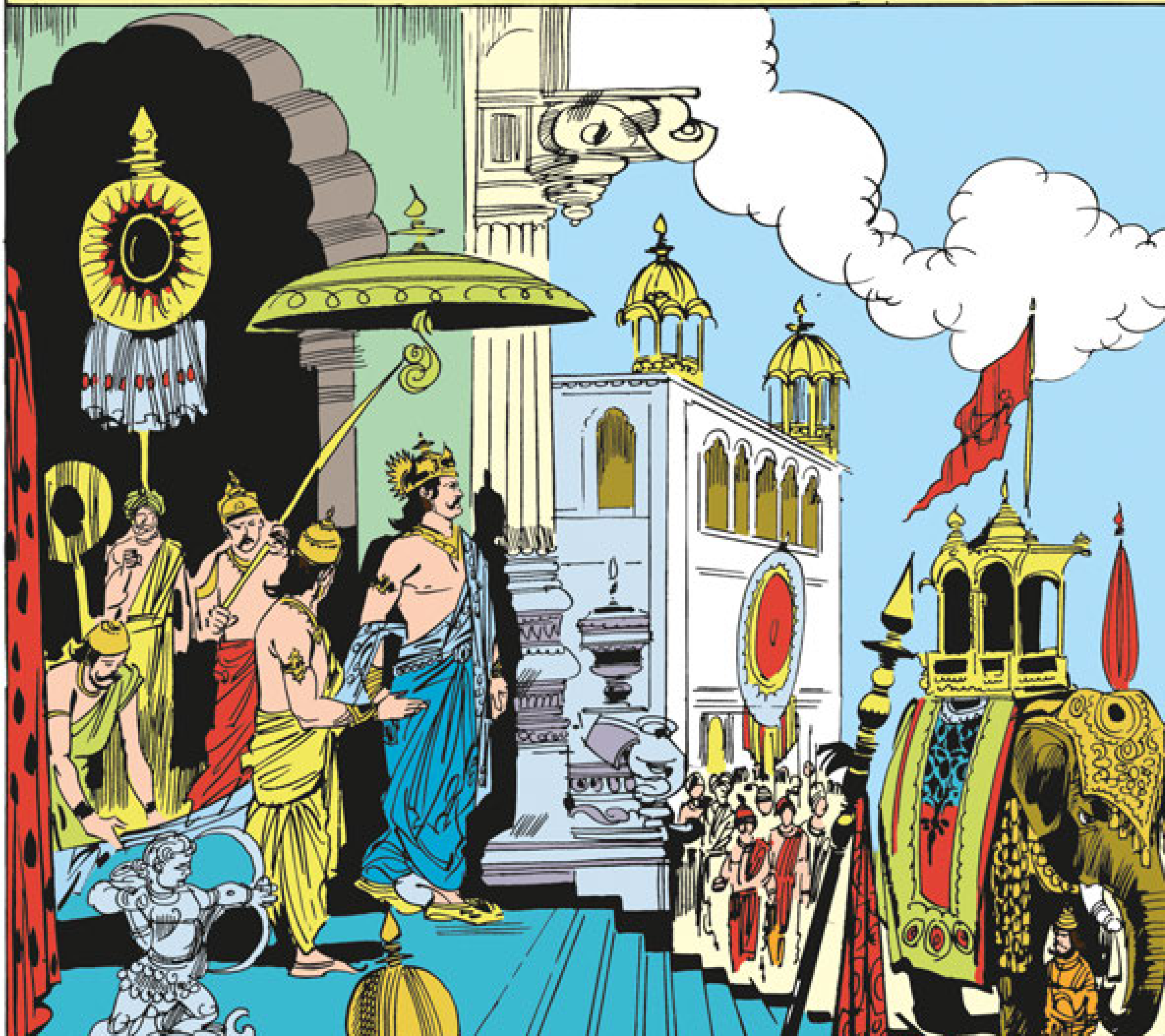
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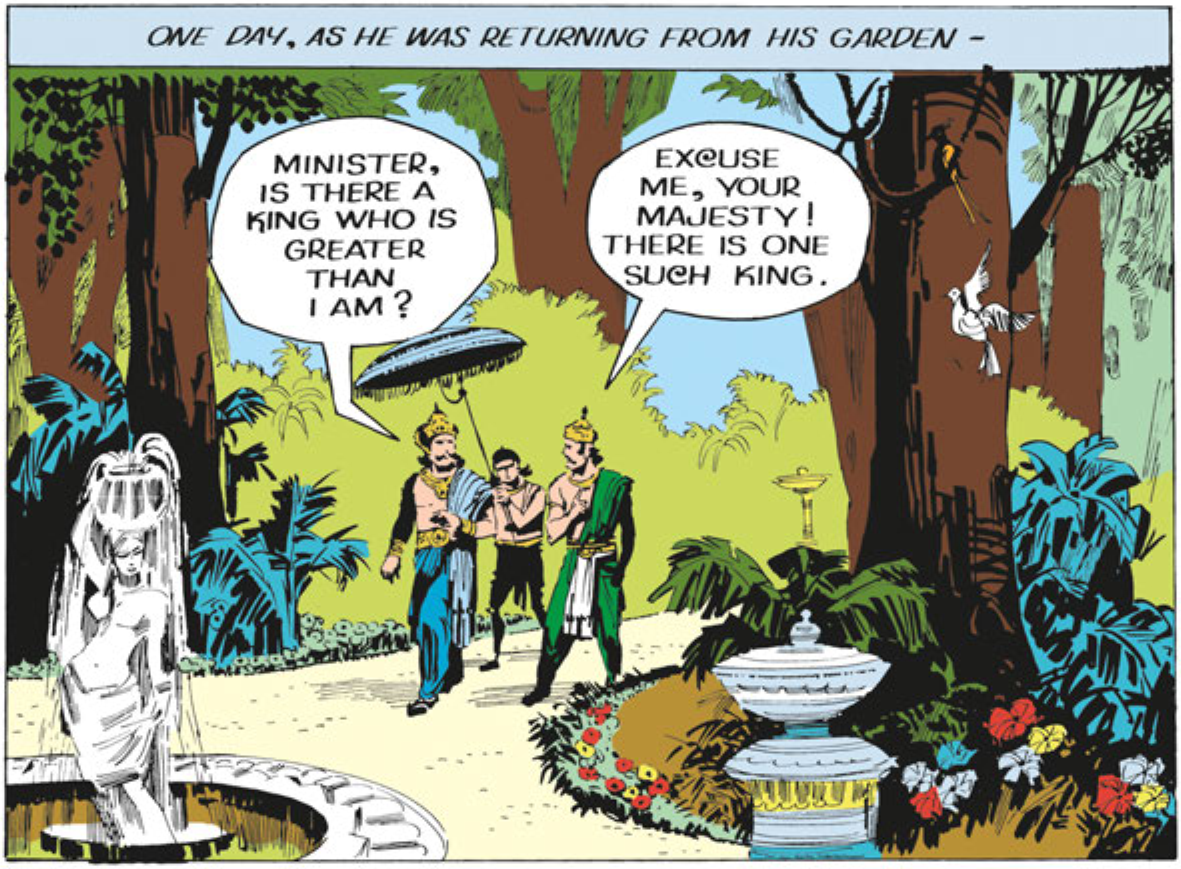
Editor
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This Amar Chitra Katha is based on the Dhamma-pada-atthakatha (5th century AD).

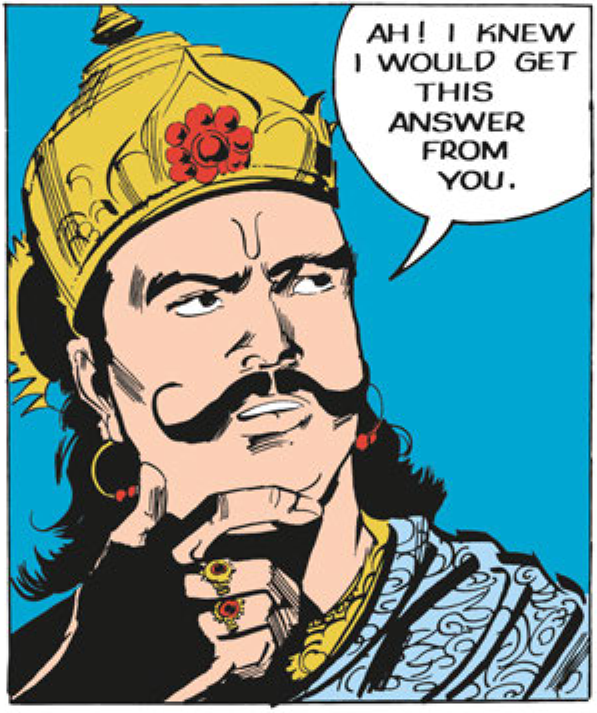
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Vasavadatta




ONE DAY, AS HE WAS RETURNING FROM HIS GARDEN -
MINISTER, IS THERE A KING WHO IS GREATER THAN I AM?
EXCUSE ME, YOUR MAJESTY! THERE IS ONE SUCH KING.


WHO IS IT?
KING UDAYANA OF KAUSHAMBI.


AH! I KNEW I WOULD GET THIS ANSWER FROM YOU.

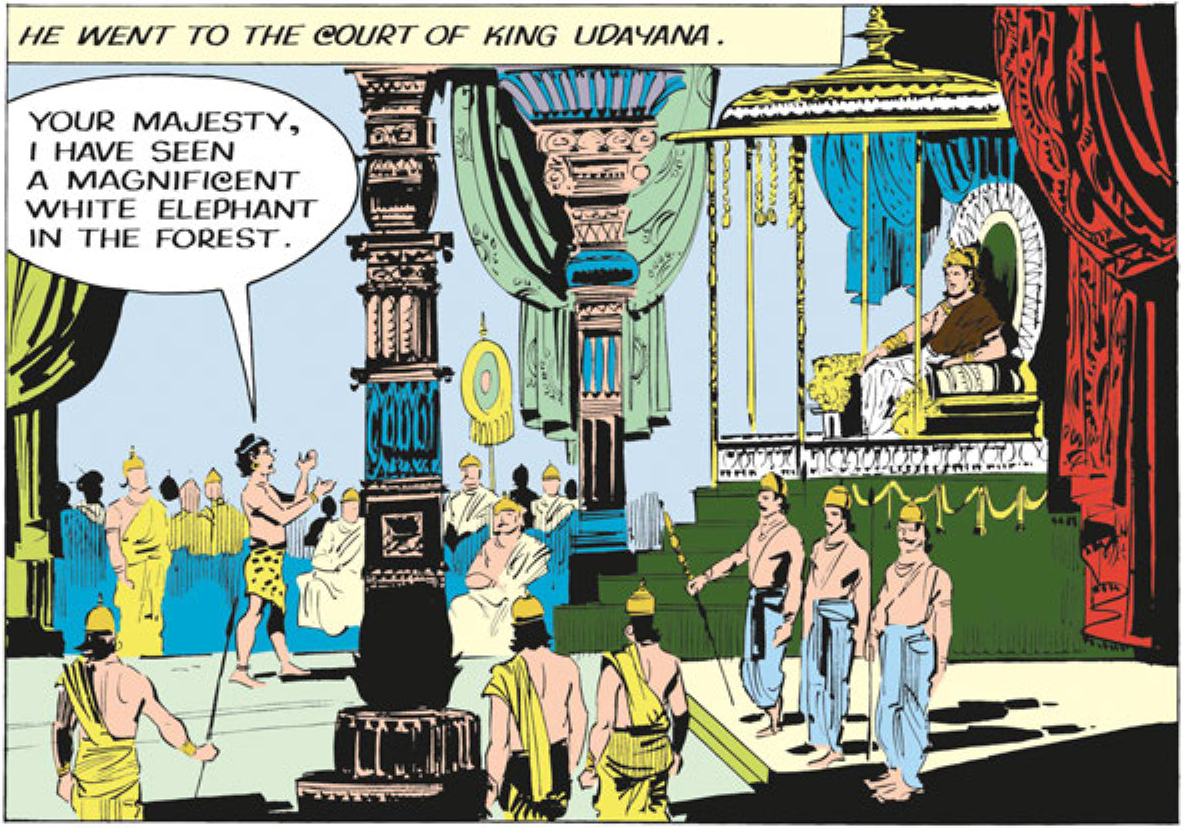

YOUR MAJESTY IS DISPLEASED! I'M SORRY.


NEXT DAY IN THE COURT -
MINISTER, I WANT KING UDAYANA CAPTURED AND BROUGHT BEFORE ME.
IT IS NOT POSSIBLE, YOUR MAJESTY!


WHY NOT ? OUR MILITARY IS STRONG. WE CAN DEFEAT HIM IN BATTLE.
KING UDAYANA KNOWS THE ART OF CHARMING ELEPHANTS.
WHAT HAS THAT TO DO WITH THE BATTLE?
YOUR MAJESTY! HE CAN RECITE SPELLS, PLAY ON HIS VEENA* AND DRIVE OUR ELEPHANTS AWAY.
* LUTE
THAT EVENING -
PRINCESS, I WANT TO SEE HIS MAJESTY ON A MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.
I AM SORRY, YOU CAN'T. HE IS BURDENED WITH WORRY.

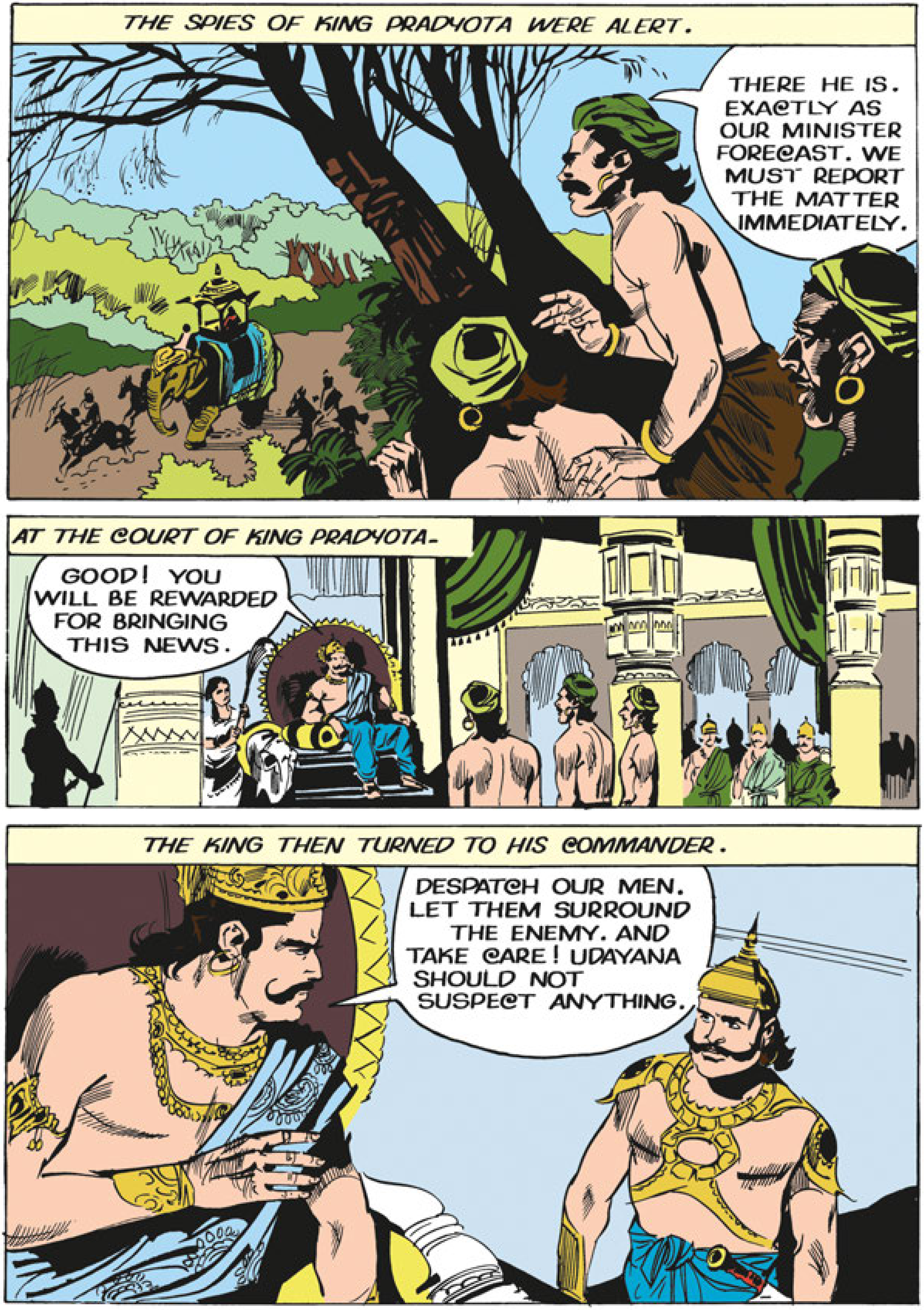

I HAVE A PLAN TO LIGHTEN THAT BURDEN. PLEASE TELL HIM SO.
LATER -
DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS WORRYING ME, MINISTER?
I KNOW, YOUR MAJESTY! YOU WANT KING UDAYANA CAPTURED SOMEHOW. AND I HAVE THOUGHT OF A PLAN.


THERE WAS A THICK FOREST BETWEEN THE KINGDOMS OF UDAYANA AND PRADYOTA. ONE DAY, A FOREST DWELLER SAW A BIG WHITE ELEPHANT.
JUST THE SORT OF ELEPHANT OUR KING WOULD LIKE TO OWN. I MUST REPORT THIS.


HE WENT TO THE COURT OF KING UDAYANA.
YOUR MAJESTY, I HAVE SEEN A MAGNIFICENT WHITE ELEPHANT IN THE FOREST.

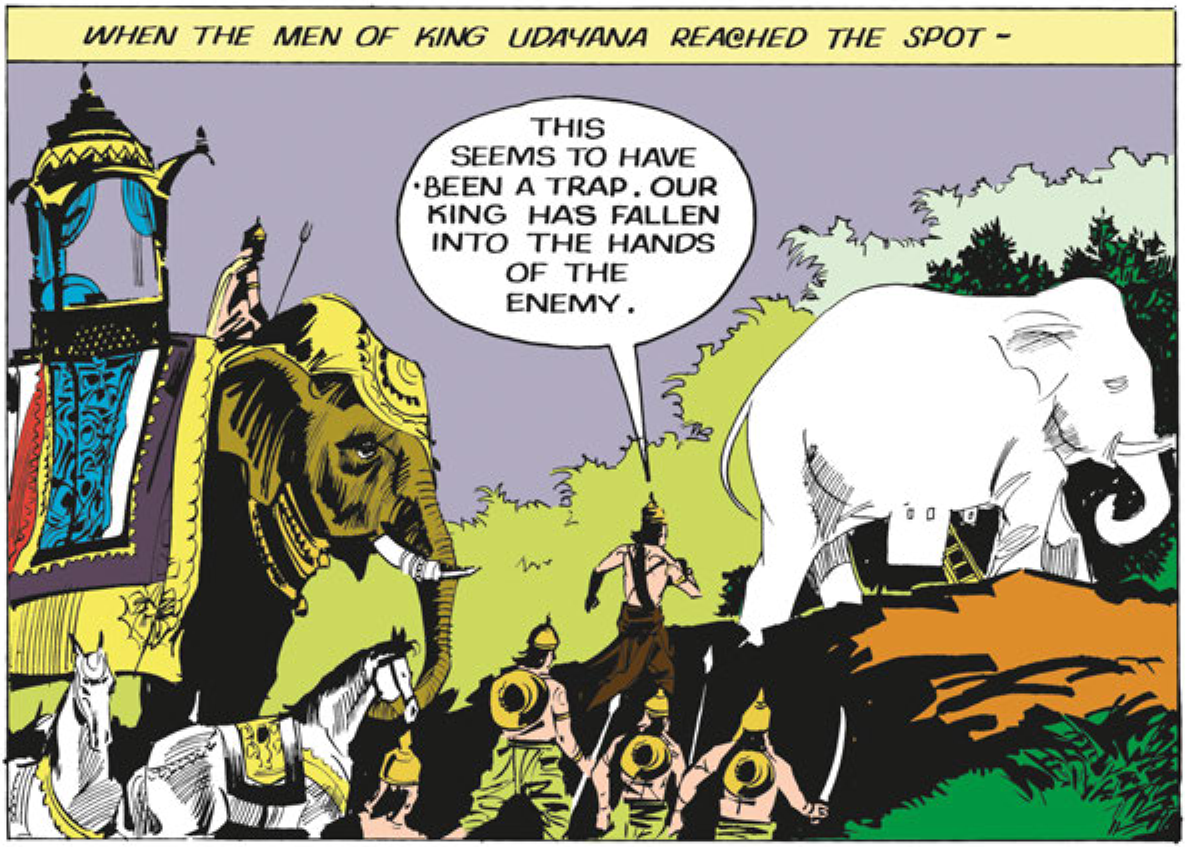

UDAYANA COULD HARDLY WAIT TO SEE AND OWN IT.
TELL ME WHERE EXACTLY IT IS. WE WILL CAPTURE IT.


HE MOUNTED HIS ELEPHANT AND SET OUT.
I MUST HAVE THAT WHITE ELEPHANT.

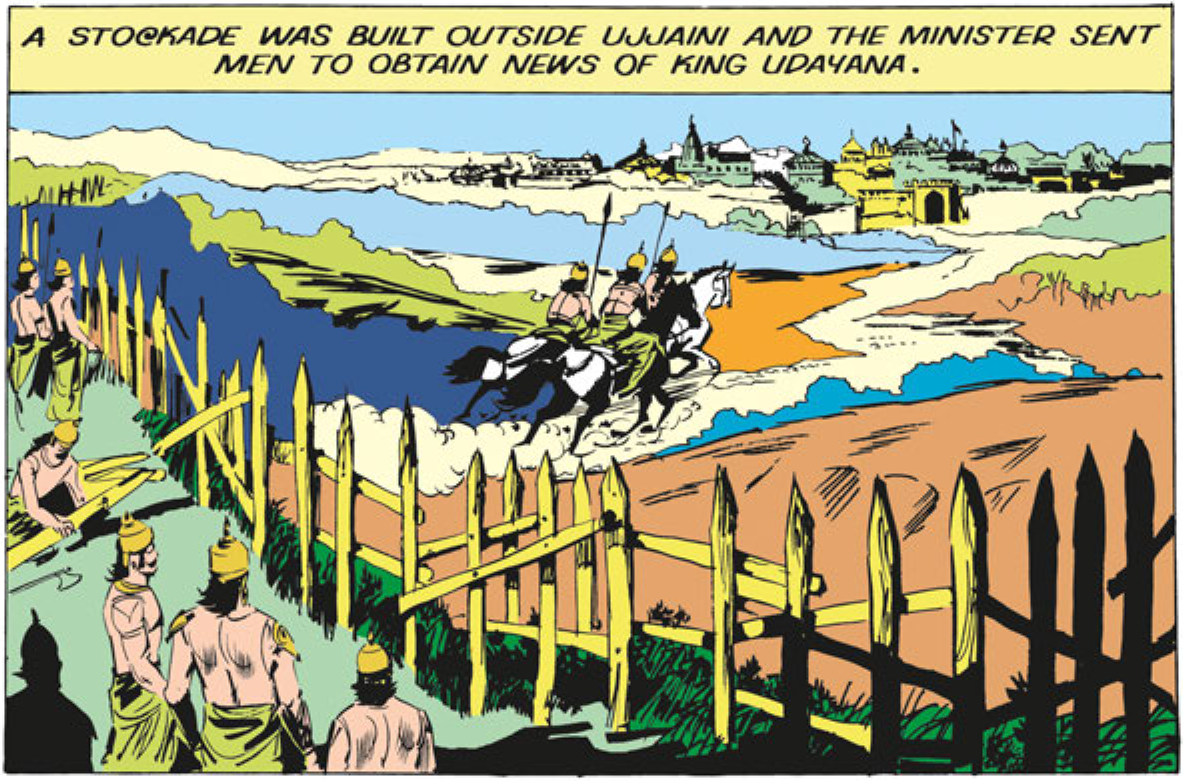

THE SPIES OF KING PRADYOTA WERE ALERT.
THERE HE IS. EXACTLY AS OUR MINISTER FORECAST. WE MUST REPORT THE MATTER IMMEDIATELY.
AT THE COURT OF KING PRADYOTA–
GOOD! YOU WILL BE REWARDED FOR BRINGING THIS NEWS.
THE KING THEN TURNED TO HIS COMMANDER.
DESPATCH OUR MEN. LET THEM SURROUND THE ENEMY. AND TAKE CARE! UDAYANA SHOULD NOT SUSPECT ANYTHING.

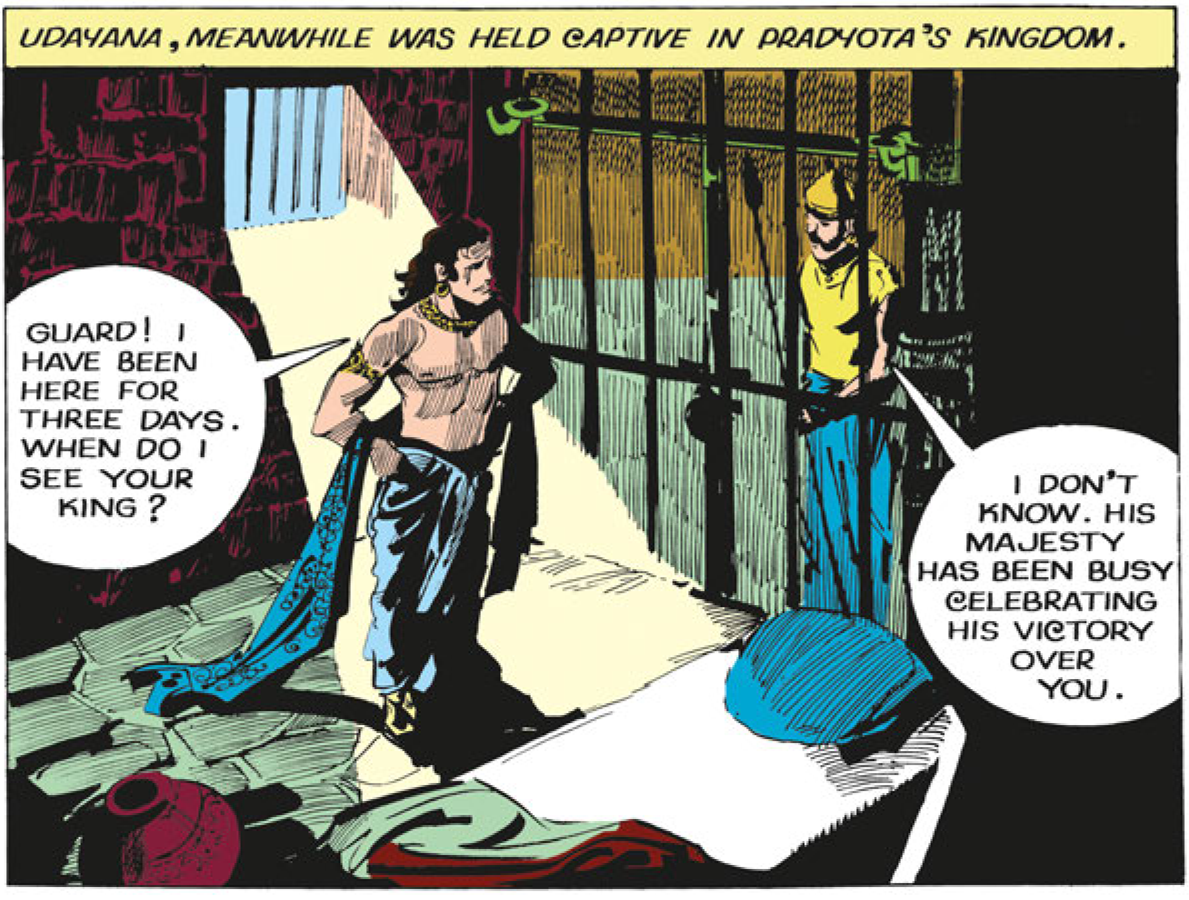

MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE FOREST -
I CAN SEE DUST CLOUDS! IT MUST BE KING UDAYANA ON HIS WAY. ON YOUR GUARD, MEN!
AT THE SIGHT OF THE MAJESTIC WHITE ELEPHANT, UDAYANA GALLOPED FASTER, LEAVING BEHIND HIS MEN.


WHAT A BEAUTIFUL ANIMAL! I AM LUCKY.
BUT HOW STRANGE! MY SPELLS SEEM TO HAVE NO EFFECT ON IT.
SUDDENLY, PRADYOTA'S MEN POURED OUT OF THE WHITE ELEPHANT.
CAPTURE HIM! TAKE HIM TO OUR KING.


WHEN THE MEN OF KING UDAYANA REACHED THE SPOT -
THIS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A TRAP. OUR KING HAS FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.


BUT, KING UDAYANA'S MINISTER WAS NOT A MAN TO LOSE HEART EASILY.
LET US BUILD A STOCKADE OUTSIDE UJJAINI AND PLAN TO FREE OUR KING.

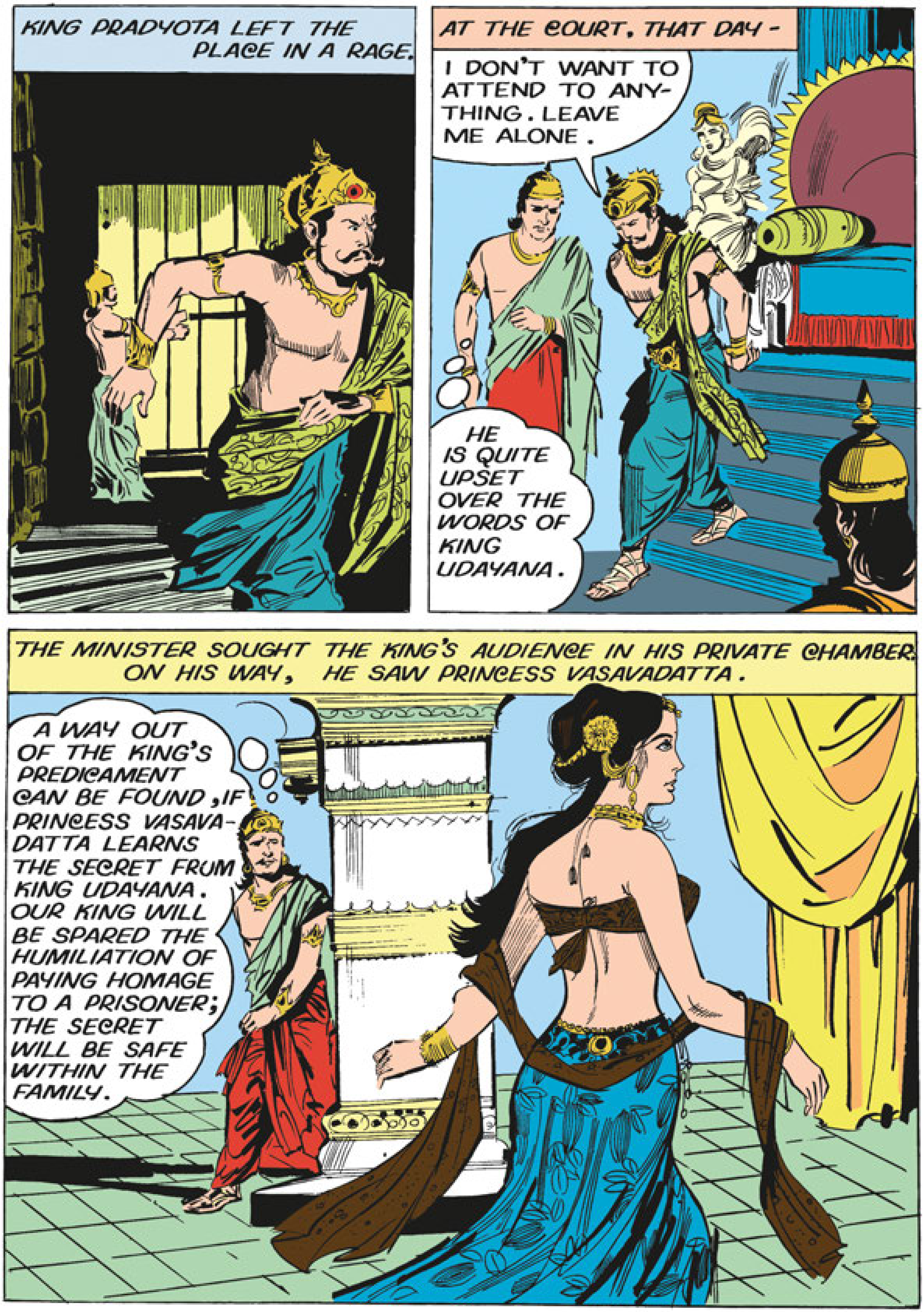

A STOCKADE WAS BUILT OUTSIDE UJJAINI AND THE MINISTER SENT MEN TO OBTAIN NEWS OF KING UDAYANA.


UDAYANA, MEANWHILE WAS HELD CAPTIVE IN PRADYOTA'S KINGDOM.
GUARD! I HAVE BEEN HERE FOR THREE DAYS. WHEN DO I SEE YOUR KING?
I DON'T KNOW. HIS MAJESTY HAS BEEN BUSY CELEBRATING HIS VICTORY OVER YOU.


DO YOU CALL THAT A VICTORY? YOUR KING HAS BEHAVED LIKE A COWARD.
YOUR KING HAS BROUGHT DISGRACE ON KSHATRIYAS. HE OUGHT TO RELEASE ME OR KILL ME.
THE KEEPER REPORTED THE MATTER TO KING PRADYOTA.
HOW DARE A CAPTIVE SAY THIS OF ME? TAKE ME TO HIM.


IS IT TRUE THAT YOU SAID THIS ?
TO BE SURE, I DID. WAS YOUR ACT BEFITTING A KSHATRIYA KING ?
KING PRADYOTA REPENTED.
VERY WELL, I WILL RELEASE YOU. BUT ON ONE CONDITION.
WHAT IS THE CONDITION ?
YOU MUST TEACH ME THE SECRET OF TAMING ELEPHANTS.

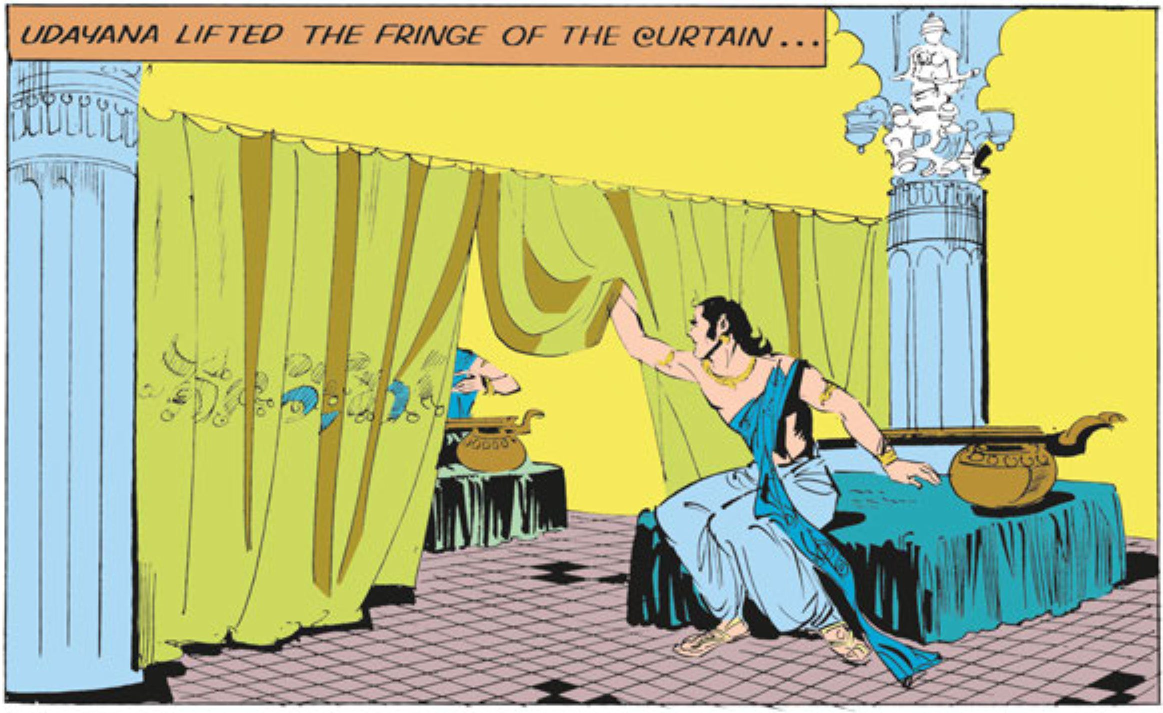

THAT I WILL, BUT ONLY IF I RECEIVE DUE SALUTATION FROM YOU.
DO YOU REALLY WANT ME TO PAY HOMAGE TO YOU?
WHY DO YOU LOOK SURPRISED? ISN'T IT CUSTOMARY FOR A PUPIL TO PAY HOMAGE TO HIS TEACHER?
I WON'T PAY YOU HOMAGE. AND IF YOU DON'T TEACH ME, I WILL HAVE YOU KILLED!
DO SO, BY ALL MEANS. YOU ARE THE LORD OF MY BODY, BUT NOT OF MY MIND.

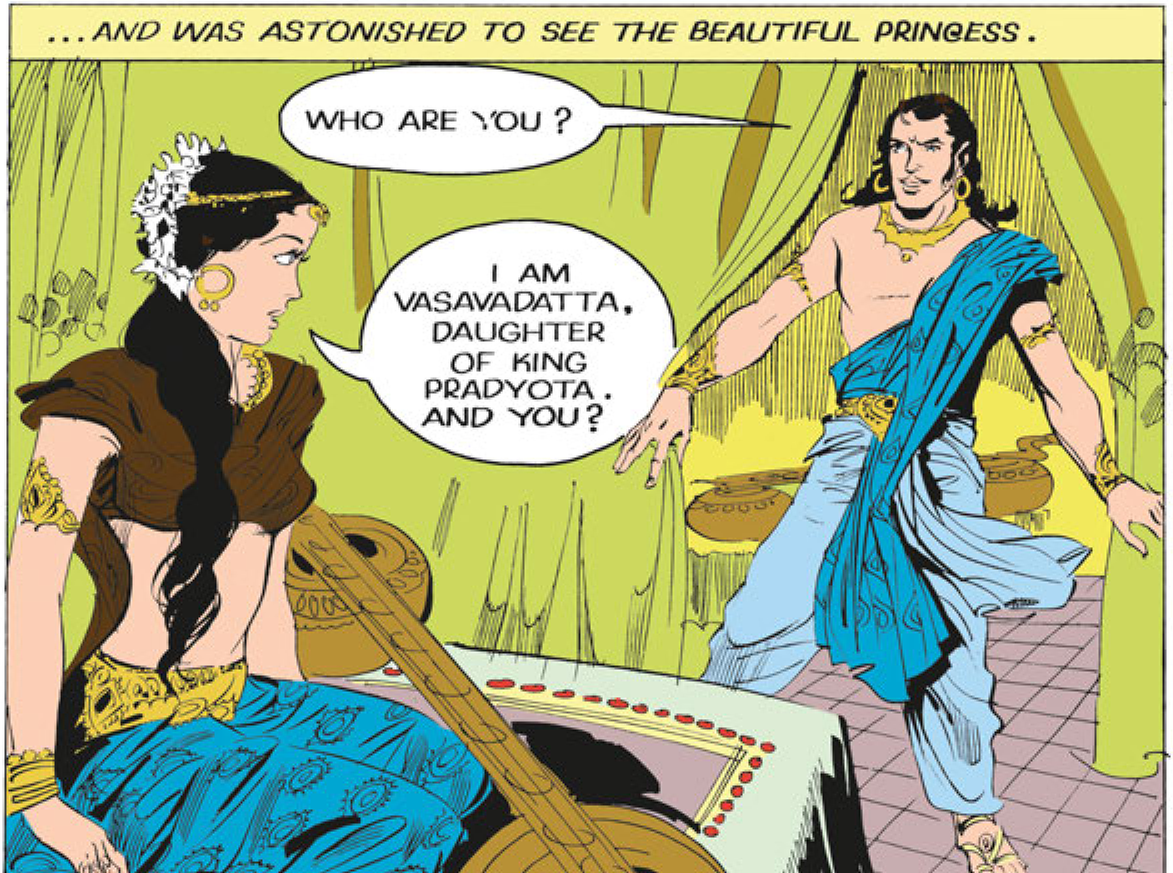

KING PRADYOTA LEFT THE PLACE IN A RAGE.
AT THE COURT, THAT DAY -
I DON'T WANT TO ATTEND TO ANYTHING. LEAVE ME ALONE.
HE IS QUITE UPSET OVER THE WORDS OF KING UDAYANA.
THE MINISTER SOUGHT THE KING'S AUDIENCE IN HIS PRIVATE CHAMBER. ON HIS WAY, HE SAW PRINCESS VASAVADATTA.
A WAY OUT OF THE KING'S PREDICAMENT CAN BE FOUND, IF PRINCESS VASAVADATTA LEARNS THE SECRET FROM KING UDAYANA. OUR KING WILL BE SPARED THE HUMILIATION OF PAYING HOMAGE TO A PRISONER; THE SECRET WILL BE SAFE WITHIN THE FAMILY.


THE KING TOO HAD THE SAME IDEA.
MINISTER, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF VASAVADATTA LEARNING THE SECRET OF TAMING THE ELEPHANTS, FROM KING UDAYANA?
A GOOD IDEA! I TOO HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
BUT I MUST ENSURE THAT THEY DON'T SEE EACH OTHER.
KING PRADYOTA WENT TO THE PRISON.
WILL YOU TEACH THE CHARM TO ANY ONE OF MY RELATIVES?
YES, WHY NOT?


WE HAVE A HUNCH-BACKED WOMAN. SHALL I SEND HER TO YOU ?
BE SHE HUNCH-BACKED OR CRIPPLED, I WILL TEACH THE ONE WHO PAYS HOMAGE TO ME.
THE KING WENT TO SEE HIS DAUGHTER.
VASAVADATTA! THERE IS A LEPER WHO KNOWS A PRICELESS CHARM. WILL YOU LEARN IT FROM HIM FOR MY SAKE ?
OH FATHER, FROM A LEPER ?
I KNOW IT IS DIFFICULT. BUT YOU CAN SIT BEHIND A CURTAIN. THEN YOU WILL NOT SEE HIS REPULSIVE FACE.
IF THAT IS YOUR WISH, FATHER, I'LL DO IT.

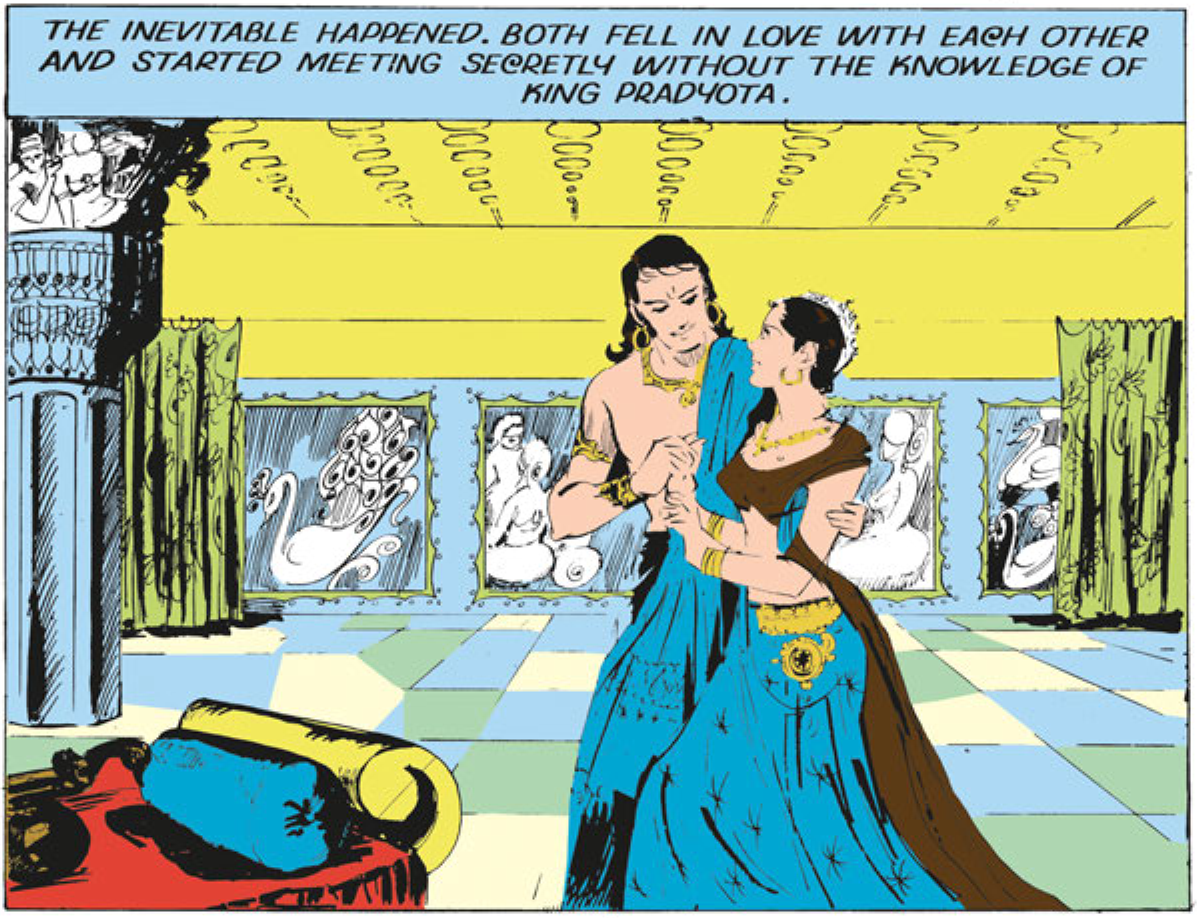

AND VASAVADATTA BEGAN HER LESSONS WITH UDAYANA.
REPEAT THIS VERSE EXACTLY AS I SAY IT.
I'LL TRY.
NO! WRONG AGAIN! YOU DUNCE OF A HUNCH-BACK! ARE YOUR LIPS THICK, TOO?
YOU VILLAIN OF A LEPER! HOW DARE YOU CALL ME A HUNCH-BACK?


UDAYANA LIFTED THE FRINGE OF THE CURTAIN ...


... AND WAS ASTONISHED TO SEE THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS.
WHO ARE YOU?
I AM VASAVADATTA, DAUGHTER OF KING PRADYOTA. AND YOU?

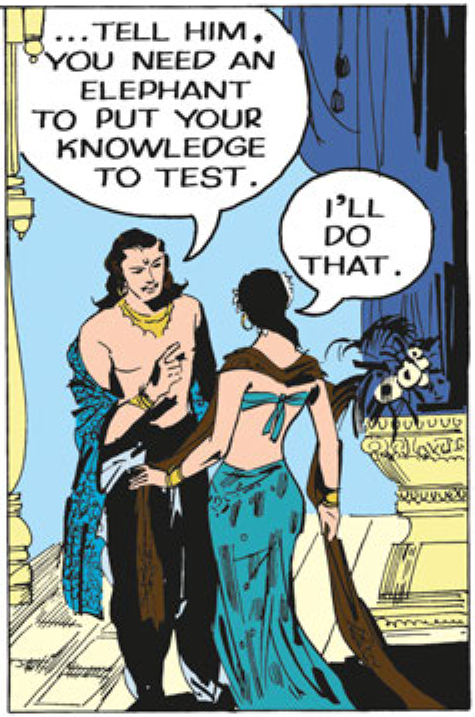

I-I'M SORRY. YOUR FATHER LED ME TO BELIEVE THAT YOU WERE A HUNCH-BACK.
I THOUGHT ... HE SAID YOU WERE A LEPER.

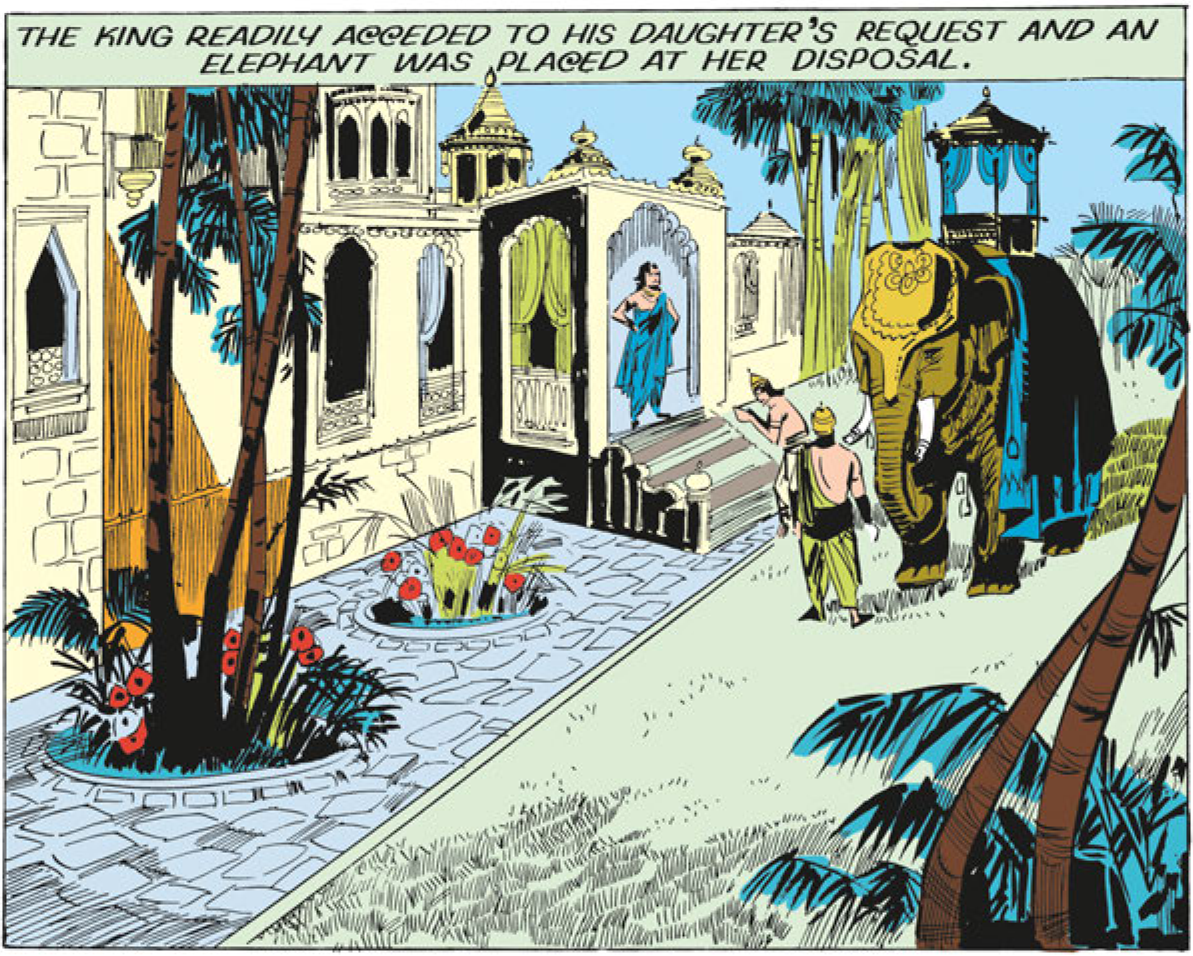

I AM KING UDAYANA.


THE INEVITABLE HAPPENED. BOTH FELL IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER AND STARTED MEETING SECRETLY WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF KING PRADYOTA.

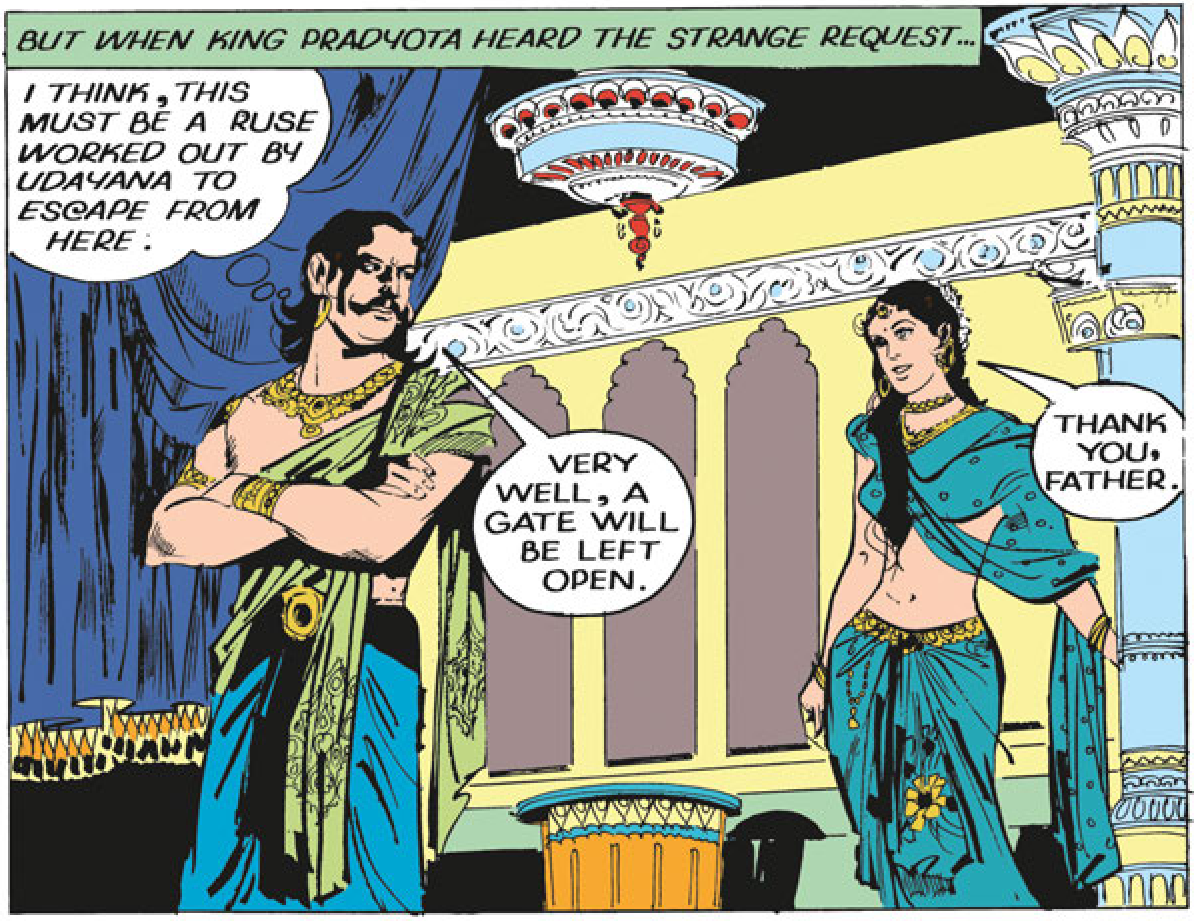

ONE DAY, KING PRADYOTA CAME TO VASAVADATTA'S CHAMBER.
DEAR DAUGHTER, HAVE YOU MASTERED THE CHANT?
NOT YET, FATHER.
IF YOU NEED MY HELP, YOU HAVE ONLY TO ASK FOR IT.
THANK YOU, FATHER.
NEXT DAY, VASAVADATTA FOUND UDAYANA IN A PENSIVE MOOD.
WHY DO YOU LOOK SO SAD? WHAT IS THE MATTER?
HOW LONG CAN I REMAIN A CAPTIVE? BESIDES YOUR FATHER WILL NOT HESITATE TO KILL ME IF HE LEARNS OF OUR LOVE.


CAN I BE OF ANY HELP?
YOUR FATHER WILL DO ANYTHING TO HELP YOU MASTER THE CHANT.


...TELL HIM, YOU NEED AN ELEPHANT TO PUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE TO TEST.
I'LL DO THAT.

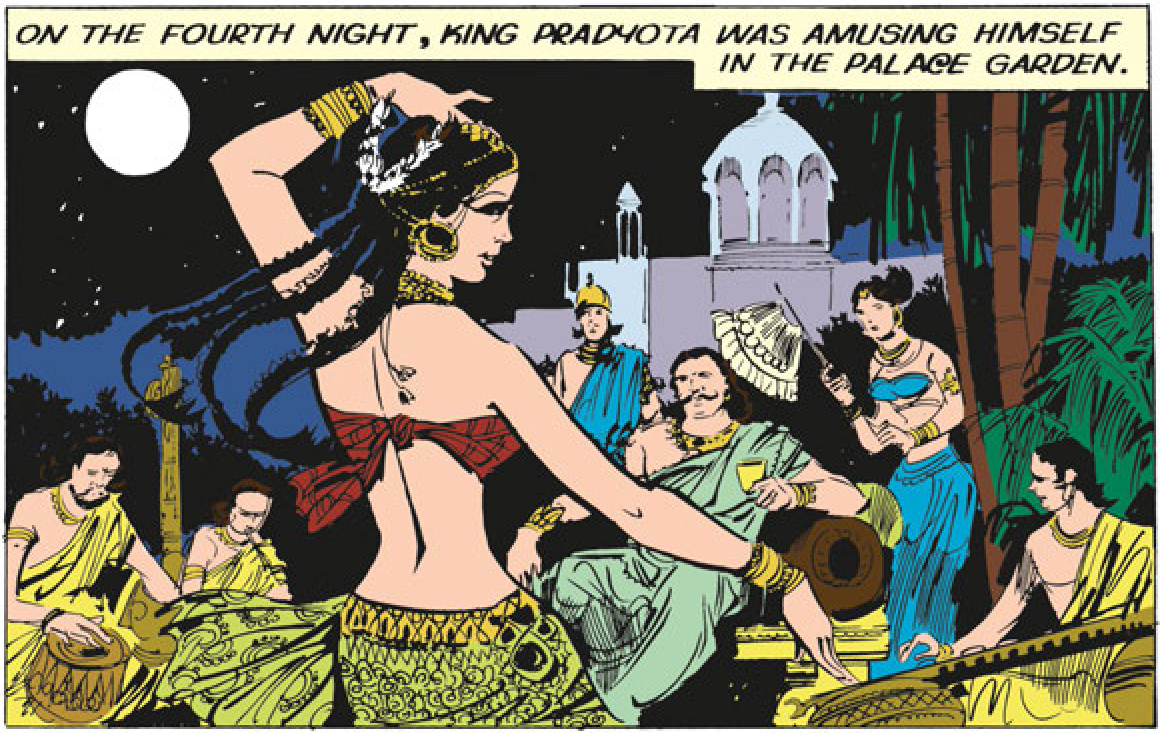

THE KING READILY ACCEDED TO HIS DAUGHTER'S REQUEST AND AN ELEPHANT WAS PLACED AT HER DISPOSAL.

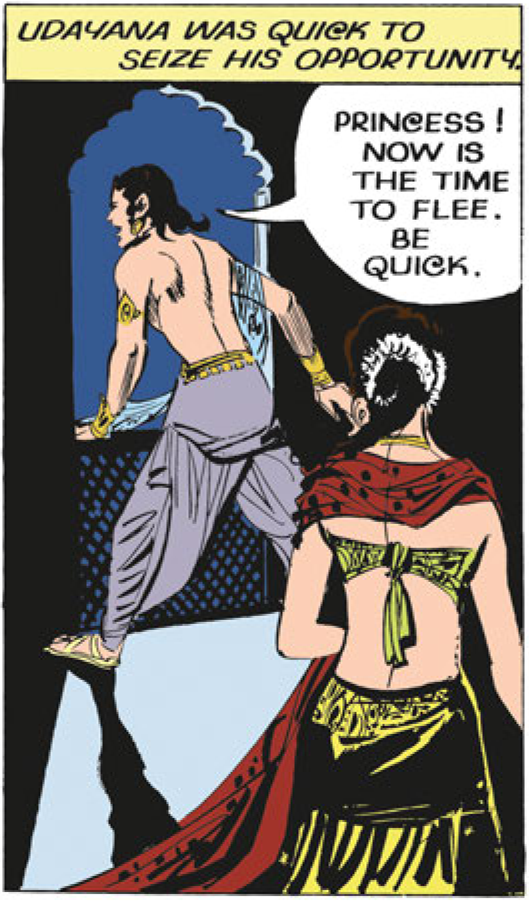

I HAVE ONLY ONE MORE REQUEST TO MAKE. I WANT A CITY GATE OPEN AT NIGHT.
MY FATHER MAY NOT AGREE TO THIS REQUEST.
I HAVE THOUGHT OF AN EXCUSE. TELL HIM, THE LEPER WANTS TO PICK A CERTAIN HERB FOR CHARMING THE ELEPHANTS.
TELL HIM, IT IS A LUMINOUS HERB AND CAN ONLY BE DETECTED IN THE DARK.
I'LL TRY MY BEST TO CONVINCE HIM.


BUT WHEN KING PRADYOTA HEARD THE STRANGE REQUEST...
I THINK, THIS MUST BE A RUSE WORKED OUT BY UDAYANA TO ESCAPE FROM HERE :
VERY WELL, A GATE WILL BE LEFT OPEN.
THANK YOU, FATHER.


THE KING CALLED FOR HIS SPIES.
LISTEN CAREFULLY. DON'T LET KING UDAYANA KNOW THAT HE IS BEING FOLLOWED. CAPTURE HIM ONLY IF HE TRIES TO RUN AWAY.
AS YOU WISH, YOUR MAJESTY.

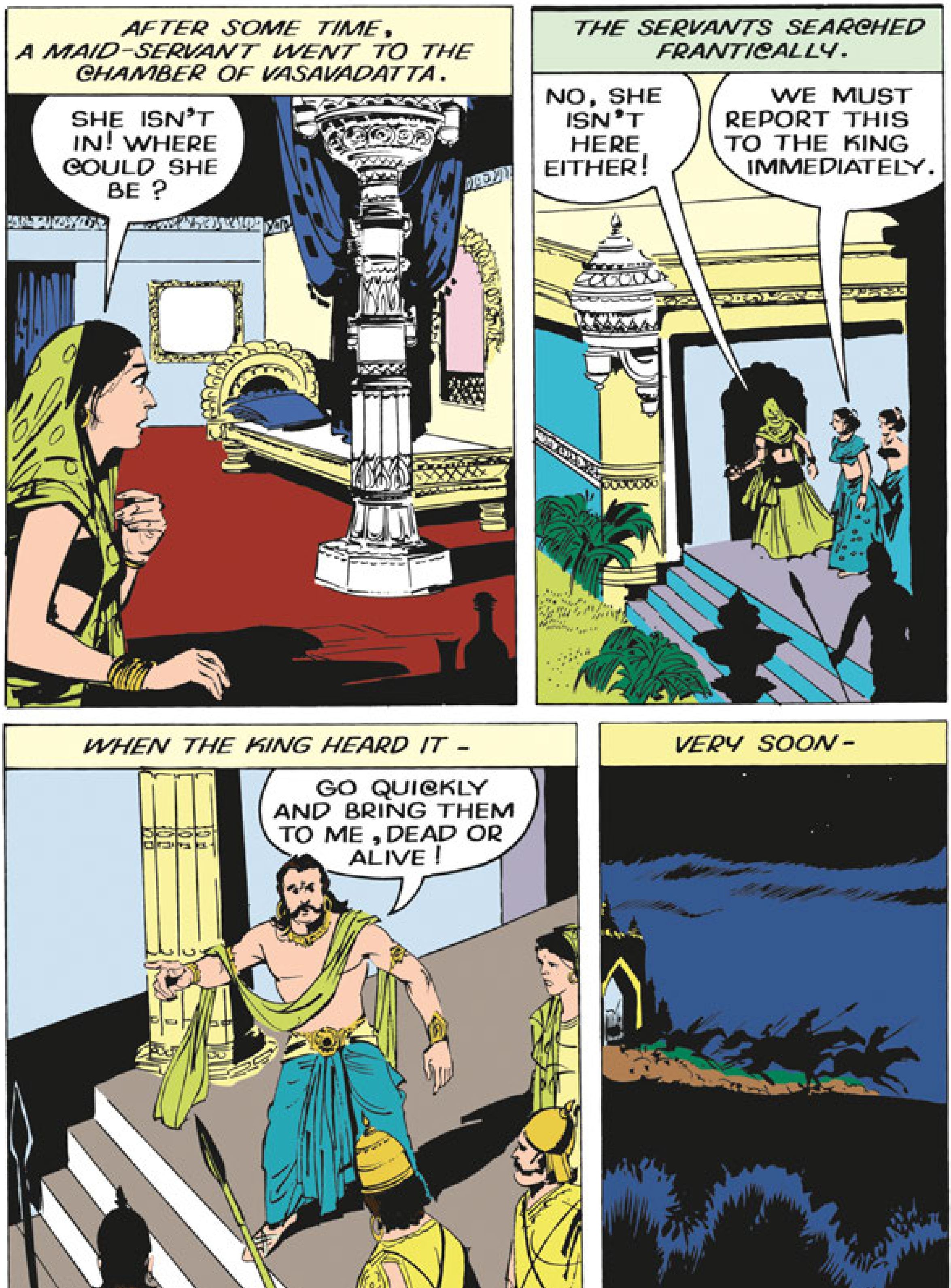

KING UDAYANA MOUNTED THE ELEPHANT, AND WENT TO THE FOREST.
I AM BEING OBSERVED. I WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.
SO FOR THREE SUCCESSIVE NIGHTS, UDAYANA PRETENDED TO LOOK FOR THE HERBS.
THE SPIES WERE THROWN OFF THEIR GUARD AND WERE NOT ALERT ANY MORE.
HE REALLY MEANS TO COLLECT HERBS.

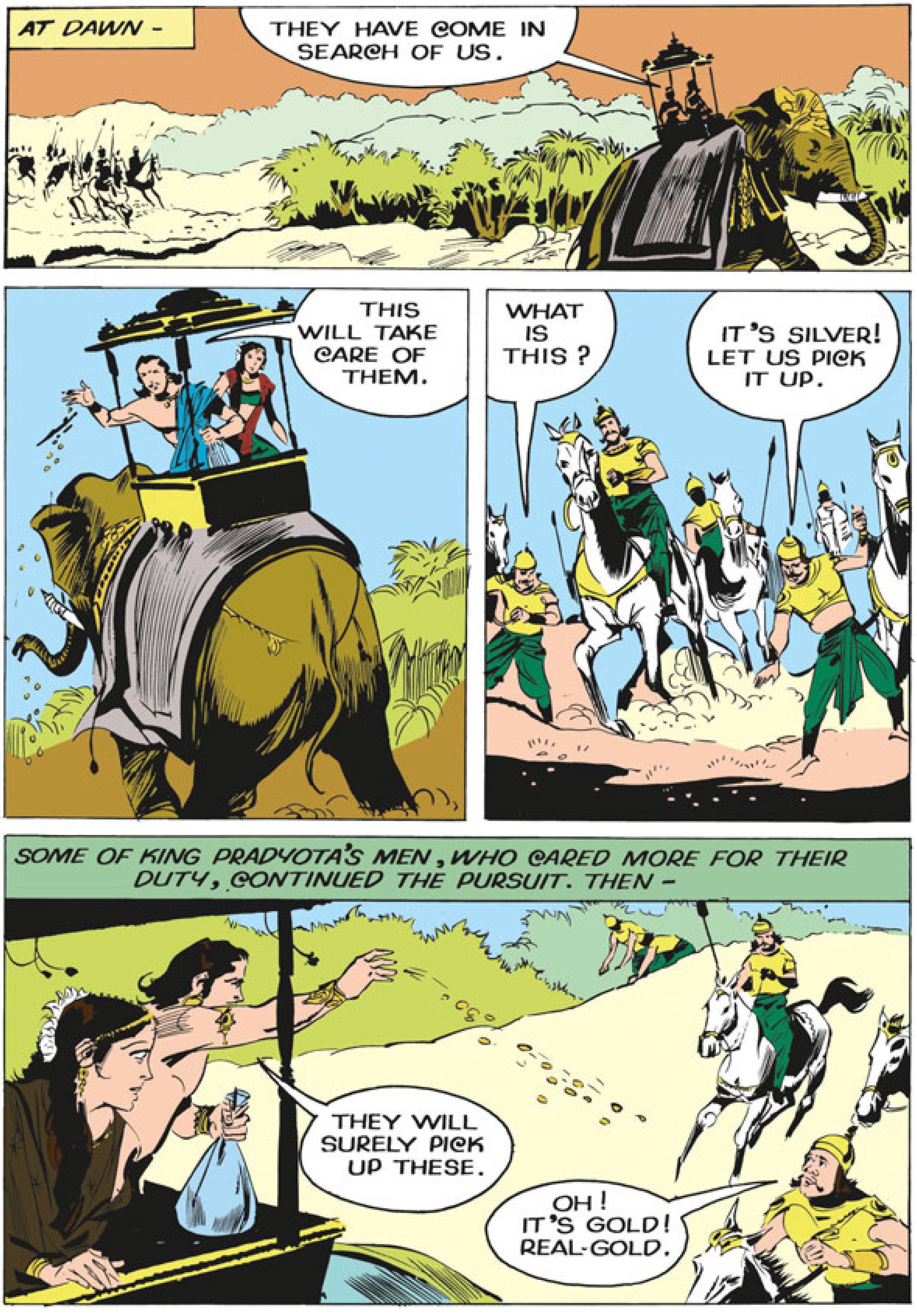

ON THE FOURTH NIGHT, KING PRADYOTA WAS AMUSING HIMSELF IN THE PALACE GARDEN.

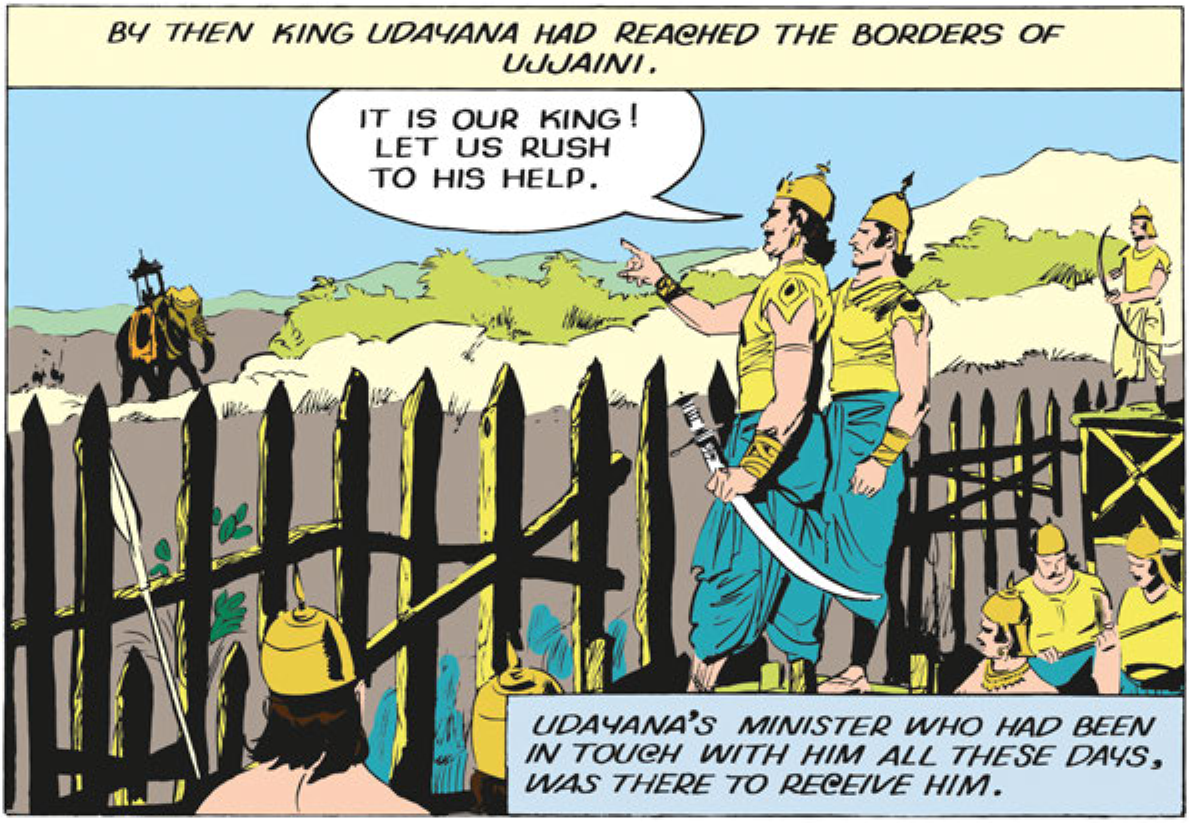

UDAYANA WAS QUICK TO SEIZE HIS OPPORTUNITY.
PRINCESS ! NOW IS THE TIME TO FLEE. BE QUICK.

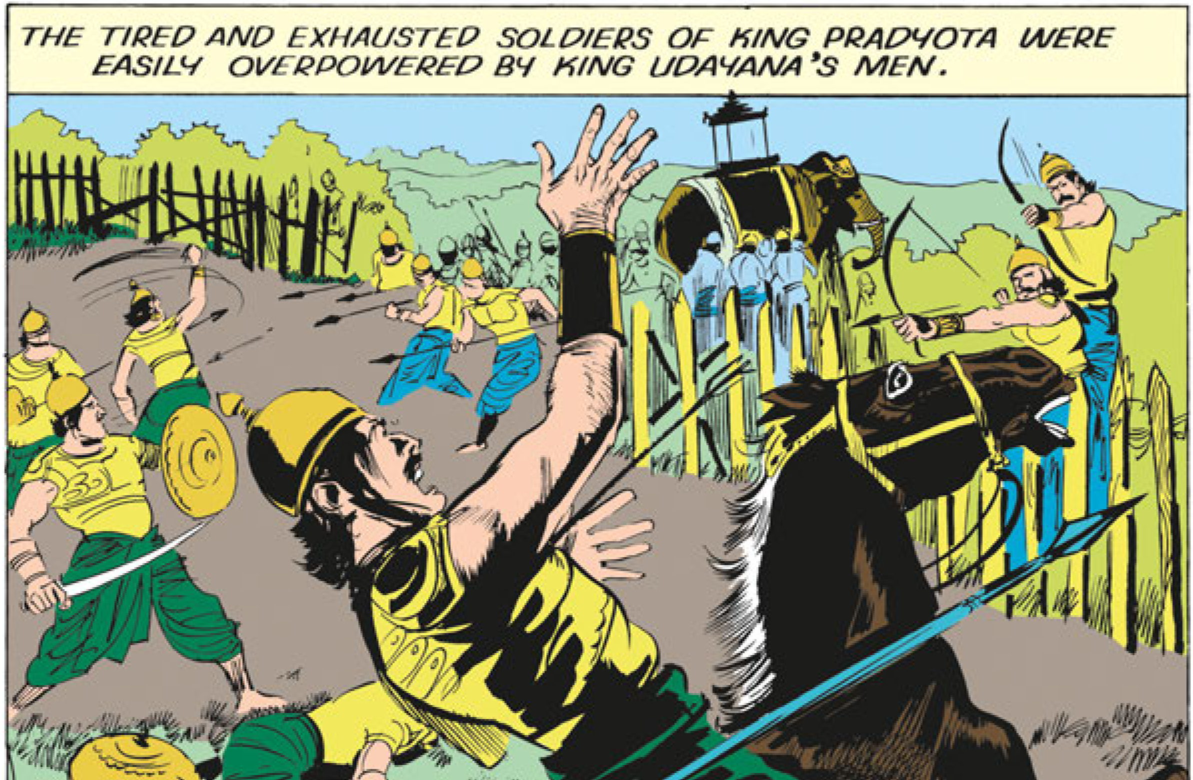

VASAVADATTA ALSO MOUNTED THE ELEPHANT.

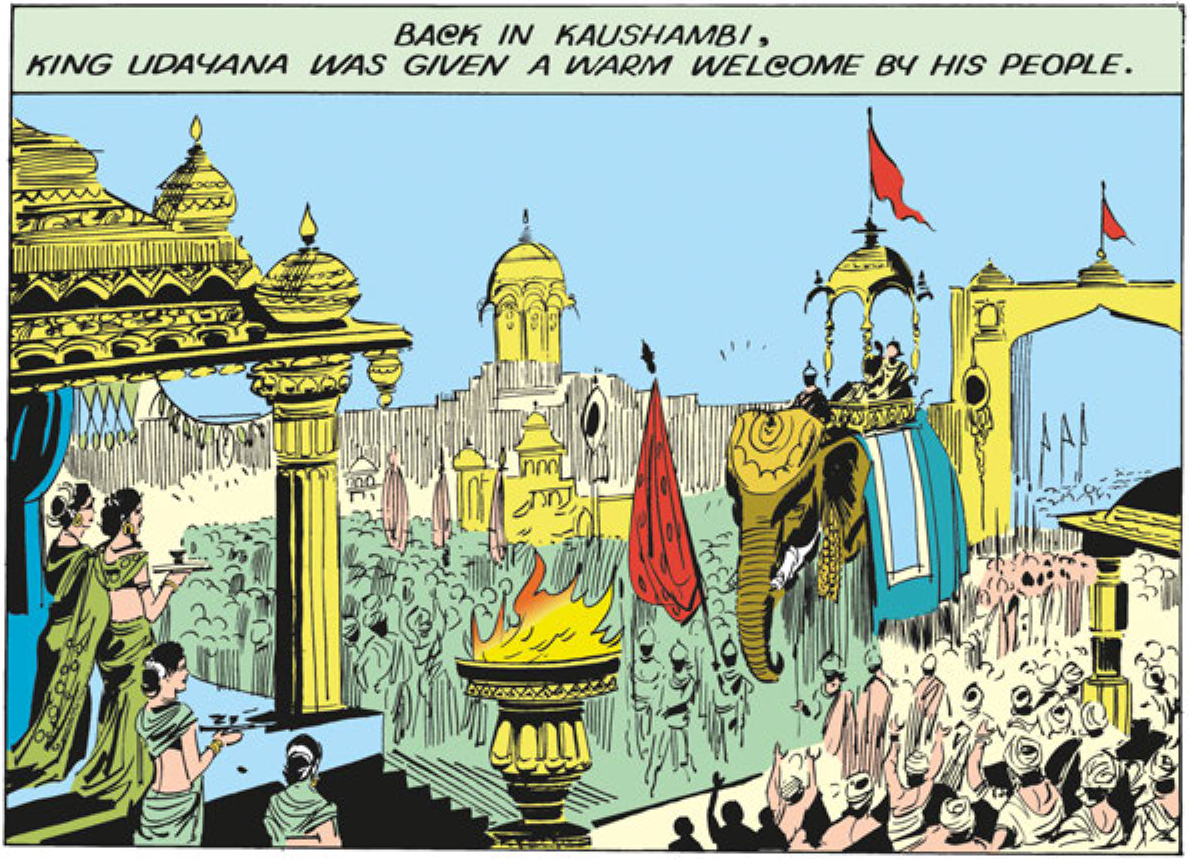

HERE! TAKE THESE SACKS. THEY WERE BROUGHT TO ME IN SECRECY.
THEY ARE HEAVY. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN THEM ?
THIS ONE IS FULL OF SILVER COINS. THE OTHER HAS GOLD COINS.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THESE SACKS ?
THAT YOU WILL KNOW SOON. QUIET NOW.

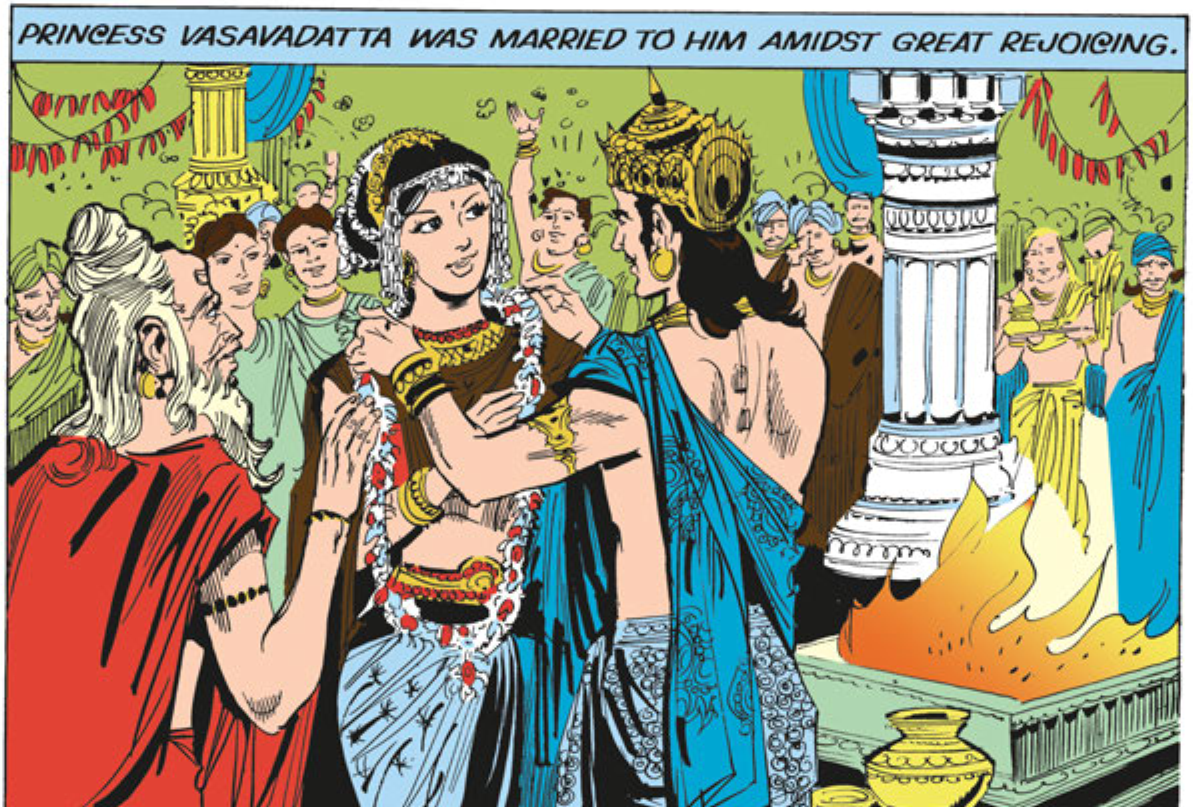

AFTER SOME TIME, A MAID-SERVANT WENT TO THE CHAMBER OF VASAVADATTA.
SHE ISN'T IN! WHERE COULD SHE BE ?
THE SERVANTS SEARCHED FRANTICALLY.
NO, SHE ISN'T HERE EITHER!
WE MUST REPORT THIS TO THE KING IMMEDIATELY.
WHEN THE KING HEARD IT -
GO QUICKLY AND BRING THEM TO ME, DEAD OR ALIVE!
VERY SOON -


AT DAWN -
THEY HAVE COME IN SEARCH OF US.
THIS WILL TAKE CARE OF THEM.
WHAT IS THIS ?
IT'S SILVER! LET US PICK IT UP.
SOME OF KING PRADYOTA'S MEN, WHO CARED MORE FOR THEIR DUTY, CONTINUED THE PURSUIT. THEN -
THEY WILL SURELY PICK UP THESE.
OH! IT'S GOLD! REAL-GOLD.


BY THEN KING UDAYANA HAD REACHED THE BORDERS OF UJJAINI.
IT IS OUR KING! LET US RUSH TO HIS HELP.
UDAYANA'S MINISTER WHO HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIM ALL THESE DAYS, WAS THERE TO RECEIVE HIM.


THE TIRED AND EXHAUSTED SOLDIERS OF KING PRADYOTA WERE EASILY OVERPOWERED BY KING UDAYANA'S MEN.


BACK IN KAUSHAMBI,
KING UDAYANA WAS GIVEN A WARM WELCOME BY HIS PEOPLE.

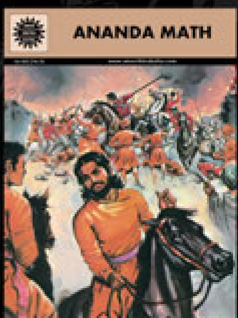

PRINCESS VASAVADATTA WAS MARRIED TO HIM AMIDST GREAT REJOICING.

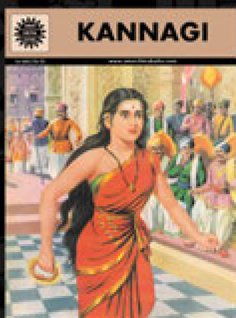
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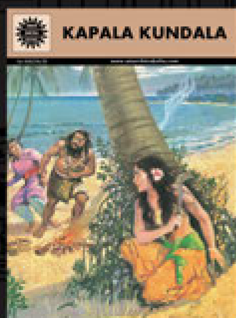
VASAVADATTA

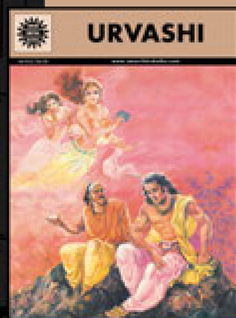
King Udayana may have been imprisoned, but his mind roamed free. Udayana could charm even the beasts of the forest with his music. Vasavadatta, the beautiful daughter of his captor, inspired him to escape the shackles of his enemy. An example of kshatriya honour and passion, their romance has been described by Indian poets and bards since ancient times.

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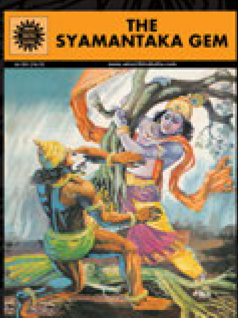




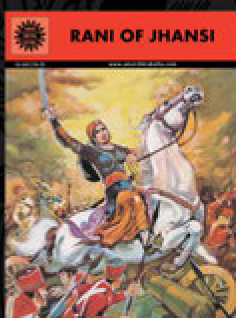




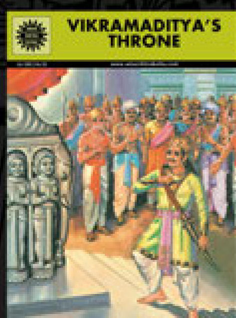
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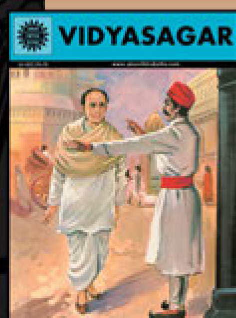
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"Amar Chitra Kathas are a glorious tribute to India's rich cultural heritage. These books have been an integral part of my children's early years, as they have been for many other families across India. Comics are a great way of reaching out to children, inculcating reading habits and driving their quest to learn more about our roots."

- NARAYAN MURTHY, CHIEF MENTOR, INFOSYS